

2 Timothy: Mentoring an Experiential Learner

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The Apostle Paul was a primary mentor of Timothy's life and leadership. 2 Timothy is an epistle that demonstrates an intentional mentoring of Paul to Timothy, that includes a process that sequentially moves through six phases focused on (a) assessment, (b) investment, (c) purity, (d) awareness, (e) practices, and (f) motivation. First century Mediterranean values are significantly correlated within Paul's mentoring model to Timothy. This mentoring model of Paul is shown to be similar to the Boyatzis' (2001) theory of self-directed learning which includes five discoveries of the (a) ideal self, (b) real self, (c) learning agenda, (d) experiential behaviors, and (e) experience discovery. Experiential learning is focused upon as a means of developing present church leaders.

The book of 2 Timothy was written from Paul to Timothy who was serving as an ecclesiastical leader in Ephesus. It is clear that the Apostle Paul saw himself as a mentor to Timothy as expressed in his words "to Timothy, my dear son." Paul's role with Timothy was likely a key source of strength as Timothy faced the extreme pressures from both inside and outside of the Ephesian church. Within Ephesus, Timothy was an experiential learner who needed the ongoing guidance of a mature leader who could guide both his life and leadership to significance. It is easy to wonder if Timothy could have been successful without the influence of Paul.

The Authorship Question of 2 Timothy

Many contemporary scholars do not believe that Paul wrote 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy or Titus (McKenzie, 2006). It can be noted from the introduction that this paper strongly supports Pauline authorship of what have become known, beginning in 1703 by Berdot, as Pastoral Epistles (Guthrie, 1990). Guthrie points out that Pauline authorship was strongly embraced until the 19th century. Many of the arguments against Pauline authorship may be adequately dismissed by understanding the unique aspect of Paul writing personally in support of his mentee Timothy, and therefore utilizing a somewhat different style than his other letters (Guthrie). A number of scholars including Bruce (1977), Guthrie, Johnson (1996), Kelly (1963), Knight (1992), and Prior (1989) have each defended Pauline

authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. It is the position of this paper that Paul did author 2 Timothy, and wrote it after he was released from prison and was then arrested a second time. This would put the date of 2 Timothy in or shortly after the year 65 (Bruce). It is important to date this epistle for the purpose of helping to establish Paul as its author and to understand the times in which Timothy received this writing.

The Cultural Context of Timothy's Leadership

To understand Paul's role with Timothy better, it is helpful to understand the specific issues that Timothy was facing. The pressures that Timothy faced in Ephesus were both from inside and outside the church itself. From within the church, Timothy was dealing with false teachers (2 Timothy 2:14-18) which would undermine the faith of believers if left unchecked (Mappes, 1995). From outside the church, Timothy was dealing with a culture that is described by Paul as terrible due to qualities of extreme hedonism and insolence (2 Timothy 3:1-5). It was during Timothy's pastorate that the church experienced its first persecution under Nero, who according to tradition was instrumental in the execution of the Apostle Paul (Bruce, 1977). By many accounts, Nero was considered insane. Under his regime it is recorded that Christians were tortured with great cruelty, which included (a) cladding them in the hides of beasts to be torn asunder by dogs, (b) crucifying some, and (c) setting others on fire to serve as illumination on poles (Bettenson & Maunder, 1999). With the heretical trouble from within the church and the extreme pressures upon the church Paul responds "keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5, New International Version).

A Pauline Model of Mentoring

Murray (as cited in Gutierrez, 2004) has shown how Paul often used parental imagery within his letters. This is seen in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:15) as well as the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica (Phil. 2:22, 1 Thess. 2:11). It is easy to feel the parental affection of Paul as he refers to Timothy as his son (2 Tim. 1:1). The Apostle Paul may well have had fundamentally two driving passions in his life. His first and foremost passion was to live intimately knowing Christ his Lord (Phil. 3:7-11) and secondly to see everyone completed fully in Christ (Col. 1:28). It is with a deep love for Christ and a driving passion to see Timothy fulfill his life call and ministry that Paul extends mentorship.

Paul's development involvement with others would often follow a pattern (Barrett, 1963). An example of a Pauline pattern can be seen in passages such as Romans 6-8. Paul begins an argument that Christians can live free from a lifestyle of sin (6:1). Paul furthers this argument by stating that sin never has dominion over a believer (6:15). Paul deals with the experiential side of salvation (7:15) when he expresses the quandary that many believers find themselves in who are espousing belief in freedom from sin, yet are bound to it at the same time. Paul then progresses his thought in Romans 8 to show how believers can live in harmony with the Spirit by choosing to focus their lives on pleasing God (8:5-6). With this foundation laid, Paul then moves to a strong admonition that believers must not live in accordance with evil desires but must live pure lives before God (8:12-14). It is in this example

that we see Paul moving through the progression of: (a) position, (b) practice, and (c) motivation. This same progression can be seen in other contexts as well, such as the way Paul presents theological concepts in the book of Ephesians. Paul establishes their (a) position in Christ, (b) practice of ethics, and (c) stand against evil (Nee, 1977). While Paul's style of writing is deeply personal in the Pastoral Epistles (Guthrie, 1990), it is the contention here that 2 Timothy is also systematic. Within 2 Timothy we can see five points of progression as Paul focuses Timothy's thoughts on (a) encouragement, (b) protection, (c) purity, (d) awareness, (e) application, and (f) motivation. This progression seems to follow a Pauline pattern of systematic thought that leads to practical application.

Paul's Process of Mentoring

Assessment. In 2 Timothy, we see Paul begin his letter with encouragement that reminds Timothy of his life and gifts. He shares his remembrance of Timothy's (a) sincere faith, (b) heritage of faith that was resident within his grandmother and mother, and (c) unique gifts to serve God. Within Mediterranean culture it would be typical for an individual to arrive at an understanding of themselves through the perspective of those whom they honor (Malina, 2001). Timothy's perspective of himself would rest to a great degree upon Paul's input. It is significant to note that Paul begins his letter to Timothy with a detailed assessment of Timothy's qualities of character in life and giftedness in his role of service.

Investment. Paul makes a transition from encouraging Timothy through assessment, to directing him to protect what God has given to him (2 Tim. 1:14). Paul advocates that Timothy see himself as (a) a soldier that owes obedience to his commanding officer, (b) an athlete that must live within certain parameters, and (c) a farmer that must wait to be rewarded for his hard work (2 Tim. 2:1-7). The investment of Timothy's gifts into his leadership at Ephesus would impact the church of Ephesus greatly (Bruce, 1977).

Purity. A focus on purity is demonstrated through an analogy of a house that holds both articles of gold and silver along with others of wood and clay. The admonition is to live purely so that he will be a better vessel for the Lord to work fully through (2 Tim. 2:20-21). It should be noted that Paul's encouragement of Timothy to pursue a life of purity rested much in the first century Mediterranean perspective that people were mixtures of both good and bad (Malina, 2001). This concept of believers being a potential mixture of good and evil is also noted in Paul's letter to the Galatian church (Gal. 5:19-25).

Awareness. Paul speaks much about the culture of Ephesus (2 Tim. 3). Paul reminds Timothy that he is living in a time when perniciousness reigns and heretics abound (3:1-9). Church history shows that Nero was bringing the first great persecution to believers during this era of Timothy's leadership (Bruce, 1977). Timothy would have to be mindful of the persecution from the culture within Ephesus and the potential division from forces within the church itself.

Practices. Paul begins to emphasize the practices of ministry that Timothy must extend in order for his leadership to be effective (2 Tim. 4). Paul encourages his protégé to relate to the people in a way that will both protect the church from wrong influences and lead them into a full relationship

in Christ. Timothy is charged to (a) preach, (b) correct, (c) rebuke, and (d) encourage as means of extending the influence of Christ to others. Paul here is encouraging Timothy to respond in a manner that focuses on both what is honorable and dishonorable (deSilva, 2000; Malina, 2001). In this style of focusing on both the honorable and dishonorable, Paul is advocating that Timothy influence the culture of the church in much of the same way that Paul focuses on honorable and dishonorable issues to form behaviors.

Motivation. Paul uses his own life as an example of someone who has kept the faith and completed his public service (2 Tim. 4:7). He is very open about the hurts that he has experienced, which included personal affronts from others as well as disloyalty from those whom he believed should have supported his efforts better (4:10-16). This would leave Timothy with a picture of a model to emulate. As Paul motivates Timothy, he again uses the first century Mediterranean culture of distinguishing what is honorable and dishonorable (deSilva, 2000; Malina, 2001). Paul lists dishonorable behaviors in contrast to what is honorable as a means of encouraging Timothy to stand strong and fulfill his life call at Ephesus.

First Century Mediterranean Culture and Paul's Style of Mentoring

As Paul is interacting with Timothy, he is in essence guiding Timothy's experiential context. John Dewey (1916/1944) wrote much about experience and learning and emphasized that experience alone does not necessarily mean that anything is learned. Dewey said that "to 'learn from experience' is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence" (page 140). Throughout 2 Timothy, we see the Apostle Paul guiding the learning of Timothy. We see him helping Timothy look backward at experiences and connect forward with learned perspective. The very culture of this time period of Paul and Timothy would have allowed Paul to be very involved in shaping and forming the perspectives of his younger mentee.

In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's time, the culture of relationships such as between Paul and Timothy would likely have been much different than many relationships in modern day America. DeSilva (2000) has explained that the dominant cultural values of this time period involved (a) honor/shame, (b) patronage and (c) kinship. The concept of honor and shame was the foundation for most moral appeals. It is clear that Paul related to Timothy with great honor toward his person and calling. It is equally clear in Scriptures (Phil. 2:19-22) that Timothy related to Paul with great honor as well.

Patronage in first century Mediterranean culture refers to a mutuality of relationship between unequal personages. Each party in the relationship was seen to benefit from the other. In 2 Timothy we easily get the sense that Timothy was receiving fatherly style input that would shore up his weaknesses and strengthen both his person and mission as a leader. Paul's appeal for Timothy to come to him (2 Tim. 4:9) shows that Paul was in need of his companion.

Kinship was at the center of how people survived in this Pauline culture. One of the greatest shames that could come upon an individual within this time was to be dismissed from their family ties

(Pilch & Malina, 1998). Timothy would have had a significant desire to please Paul and be subordinate to his leadership as someone he looked to as a fatherly figure. Paul would have had a strong desire to pass on positive values that would allow Timothy to be successful.

Perhaps one of the greatest differences between first century Mediterranean society and present American values is the issue of privacy (Pilch & Malina, 1998). Within America there is a strong aversion to enter the private lives of others. Additionally, allowing someone to enter the private world of an American is typically met with some reluctance. In Paul's day however, there was a significant unwillingness to leave the lives of others alone or to disallow others from entering one's own life. It is apparent in 2 Timothy that Paul is intimately acquainted with Timothy's (a) family heritage, (b) personal proclivities, and (c) areas that he should develop. He also gives him specific instruction as to how he should conduct himself.

Another key distinction between American and Pauline culture is how one's personal beliefs are formed. In America, defining one's beliefs is an intensely personal matter. With Pauline culture, one would discover beliefs in and through group life (Pilch & Malina, 1998). It would have been rare for an individual to experience great autonomy. Beliefs were experienced within a community. Perhaps one of the reasons that this epistle would have been greatly encouraging to Timothy was due to the reassurance that he was within Paul's spiritual family, which greatly supported him within a culture that would at times seek to mitigate his influence or reject his input.

Timothy's Development in an Experiential Context

David Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). By understanding the context in which Timothy was developing, it is easy to see that his transformation within this setting was a product of both (a) knowledge, and (b) experience. John Dewey (1916/1944) has been considered a seminal source advocating learning within the context of experience. Dewey believed that learning in isolation perpetuated a duality between (a) the mind and action, and (b) the individual and society. This duality was unlikely in Timothy's developmental setting. He was learning from Paul as he was practicing and experiencing the results of his own leadership.

The interactive dynamics between Paul and Timothy, specifically focusing on experiential development, show how the Mediterranean culture, which easily allowed people to become intimately involved in each others' lives, benefited Timothy's development. Timothy had a relationship with Paul that allowed guidance to be given within his context of experience, in spite of significant turbulence from both within and without the church. It appears that what Paul and Timothy experienced in their interrelated and interdependent relationship is often lacking in the development of church leaders in America. One of the great lessons from 2 Timothy is that our interaction with each other, as we are involved with experiences, can be significantly transformational.

Boyatzis's Theory of Self-Directed Learning and Paul's Mentoring Style

The Apostle Paul's involvement with Timothy's transformation is akin to a modern day theory of experiential learning espoused by Boyatzis (2001). Within Boyatzis' model are five discoveries that an individual processes through:

1. They discover their ideal self. This appears to be a great emphasis of Paul in the beginning of 2 Timothy. Paul reminds Timothy of his (a) spiritual heritage, and (b) spiritual calling. This would certainly paint in Timothy's mind a picture of his ideal self.

2. They discover their real self. This is in contrast to the ideal self. It is easy to see Paul emphasizing this perspective to Timothy as well, as he indicates a number of qualities that Timothy must forsake and embrace in his life (2 Tim. 2:20-21). It is important to note Paul's language (2 Tim. 2:21) when he tells Timothy that it is his responsibility to recognize certain proclivities and deal with them accordingly. Boyatzis' concept, in this second discovery of seeing one's real self, is to look into a mirror and see both strengths and weaknesses. Understanding both strengths and weaknesses was part of the first century Mediterranean culture as well (Pilch & Malina, 1998). Timothy must not only see what he could be, but also the assets and deficits within his person.

3. They establish a learning agenda. This would have to do with taking stock of strengths and addressing weaknesses (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). By beginning 2 Timothy with an emphasis of the personal strengths of Timothy, Paul is then able to move into addressing his weaknesses as well.

4. They begin experimenting and practicing new behaviors that will impact life and leadership. Again, we see this with Timothy as he is instructed to extend specific behaviors of (a) preaching the Word, (b) correcting, (c) rebuking, and (d) encouraging to the Ephesian church (2 Tim. 4:2). We also see that Paul instructs Timothy to practice exclusion of some influencers within the church for the sake of health within the congregation (2 Tim. 3:5).

5. They experience discovery. This is the development of supportive and trusting relationships that foster the ability to change. This principle is certainly central to the book of 2 Timothy as Paul extends personal and practical support to his younger protégé.

It may be that the emphasis of experiential learning that has been noted in the works of Boyatzis, et al. (2002), Dewey (1916/1944), and Kolb (1984), may actually be keenly observed in the life of the Apostle Paul dating back to the first century. Paul appears to intentionally move Timothy through discoveries of himself through the epistle of 2 Timothy. We know from church history that Timothy became a martyr as he faithfully served the church at Ephesus. It appears that even Paul's own example of giving his life was followed by his apprentice in ministry.

Help for Ministers Today

It is not a new concept that ministry is filled with difficulty and even points of dread. Gregory of Nazianzus questioned whether anyone is prepared to enter the pastoral ministry, when he said in the fourth century, "no one, if he will listen to my judgment and accept my advice! This is of all things most to be feared, this is the extremest of dangers in the eyes of everyone who understands the

magnitude of success and the utter ruin of failure!” (Williams, 2005, p. 13). A statistical review of pastoral leadership today, as reported by a survey conducted by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth in 1991 (Wind & Rendle, 2001), clearly shows troubles for ministers today as well: (a) 80% of pastors believe their pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families, (b) 75% reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry, (c) 50% felt unable to meet the demands of the job, (d) 90% felt inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands, (e) 70% have a lower self-image than when they began their professions, and (f) 50% had considered leaving the ministry within the three months prior to completing the survey.

Williams (2005) speaks of the life of Gregory of Nazianzus and notes how he ran from his calling for seven months. Gregory would later return to his initial place of service only to flee three more times in his pastoral career when he faced new ministerial responsibilities. Gregory later became a very significant leader within the church and strongly espoused that pastoral training must incorporate learning with actual experience and practice.

It may be that the reason pastors are suffering such a plight today is because the essence of their training is done predominantly apart from the practice of their ministry. Dewey (1916/1944) emphasized that knowledge that is isolated from experience tends to prevent the formation of new habits and the reconstruction of experience. In essence, it becomes harder to learn once knowledge is emphasized apart from the actual application of its value.

Biblical models of mentoring would include (a) Moses and Joshua, (b) Elijah and Elisha, (c) Jesus and the Disciples, (d) Paul and Timothy, and (e) Paul and Titus. Commonalities within these dyadic relationships are (a) teaching, (b) experiencing ministry together, and (c) strong support for each other. These three commonalities fit well with first century Mediterranean values (Pilch & Malina, 1998) where a mentor would easily give input into the life of another (Wright, 2005). Living and working closely together was common, and mutuality of support extending from mentor to mentee, and mentee to mentor was very normative.

Perhaps by noting some American values that create significant autonomy and move us to a mindset of individualistic success (Pilch & Malina, 1998), we should examine how as ministers we can stay interconnected with each other as they move through their careers. In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He prayed that the disciples would be one, so that the world would believe (John 17:23). In essence, Jesus indicated that our relationship with each other has a direct bearing on our effectiveness in the task of ministering to others. Paul's example to us in 2 Timothy should lead to the understanding that we deeply need each other as we pursue a career of influencing others for Christ.

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